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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, March 19, 2004

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on Funding for the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction

March 12, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am notifying the Congress of my intent to use funds provided in Public Law 107–38, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Recovery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the United States, FY 2001, for the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (the "Commission").

At this time, $4 million will be transferred from the Emergency Response Fund for the Commission. As provided in Public Law 107–38, these funds will be made available to the Commission immediately.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Czech Republic-United States Additional Protocol Amending the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment Treaty

March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the United States of America and the Czech Republic to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic Concerning the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment of October 22, 1991, signed at Brussels on December 10, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with the Czech Republic, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This

Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with the Czech Republic, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after the Czech Republic joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require the Czech Republic to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Slovak Republic-United States Additional Protocol Amending the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment Treaty

March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the United States of America and the Slovak Republic to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic Concerning the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment of October 22, 1991, signed at Brussels on September 22, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with the Slovak Republic, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with the Slovak Republic, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after the Slovak Republic joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require the Slovak Republic to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Poland-United States Additional Protocol Amending the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment Treaty

March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland Concerning Business and Economic Relations of March 21, 1990, signed at Brussels on January 12, 2004. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Poland, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Poland, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Poland joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Poland to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Estonia-United States Additional Protocol Amending the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment Treaty

March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Protocol Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Estonia to the Treaty for the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investment of April 19, 1994, signed at Brussels on October 24, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and

these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Estonia, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Estonia, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Estonia joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Estonia to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Lithuania-United States Additional Protocol Amending the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment Treaty

March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to the Treaty for the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investment of January 14, 1998, signed at Brussels on September 22, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Lithuania, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Lithuania, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Lithuania joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Lithuania to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Latvia-United States Additional Protocol Amending the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment Treaty

March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Latvia to the Treaty for the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investment of January 13, 1995, signed at Brussels on September 22, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Latvia, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Latvia, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Latvia joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Latvia to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address
March 13, 2004

Good morning. This week, I met with entrepreneurs and workers in Ohio and New York and talked to them about how we are strengthening America's economy. Over the past 3 years, America's economy has faced a series of challenges, stock market decline, recession, terrorist attacks, corporate scandals, and the uncertainties of war. My administration confronted those challenges squarely and acted boldly. We reduced taxes on families and small businesses. We encouraged new investment, and we're seeing the results.

America has the fastest growing major industrialized economy in the world. American productivity has grown faster over the last 2 years than at any time in more than 50 years. More manufacturers have been reporting rising activity than at any point in the last 20 years. Homeownership rates are the highest ever. Inflation is low, and interest rates and mortgage rates are near historic lows. The unemployment rate of 5.6 percent is below the average unemployment rate in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. And last month marked the sixth consecutive month of increased employment in America.

Yet, some industries and some parts of the country are still lagging behind. In Ohio, where many manufacturers are now so productive, they can produce more goods without hiring new workers. In cities like Youngstown and Cleveland, many workers are concerned about their future, about their benefits, and about the opportunities their children will have.

Some politicians in Washington see this new challenge, and they want to respond in old, ineffective ways. They want to increase Federal taxes, yet punishing families and small businesses is not a job-creation strategy. They want to build up trade walls and isolate America from the rest of the world, but economic isolationism would threaten the millions of good American jobs that depend on exports. These tired, old policies of tax and spend and economic isolationism are a recipe for economic disaster. There's a better way to help our workers and help our economy.

First, we must pursue a confident policy of trade. Millions of American jobs depend on our goods being sold overseas, and foreign-owned companies employ millions of Americans here at home. We owe those workers our best efforts to make sure other nations open up their markets and keep them open. We want the entire world to "Buy American," because the best products in the world carry the label, "Made in the USA."

Second, we must remain the best place in the world to do business, to start a company and hire workers. We need fewer mandates and unnecessary regulations on small businesses. We need legal reform in America to cut down on junk lawsuits. We need to help companies and their employees confront the rising costs of health care. We need to make sure the tax relief is made permanent to keep our economy on the path to growth and job creation.

Third, we need to make sure American workers are prepared for the higher skilled jobs our economy is creating. I worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act, which is bringing higher standards to every public school in America. We have a plan to help our high schools and community colleges train people in the skills they need. We're helping workers who have been displaced by the effects of trade by giving them assistance for job training and health care and relocation expenses.

Again and again, economic pessimists have questioned the skills and creativity and energy of America's workers. The pessimists have always been wrong. America's workers and entrepreneurs will meet every challenge. With the right policies in Washington, we will maintain America's economic leadership; we will create more jobs; and we'll help our workers achieve a better life.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:35 a.m. on March 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in a Discussion on Homeownership in Ardmore, Pennsylvania

March 15, 2004

The President. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for coming today. You're probably wondering what we're doing here. I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to talk about one of the most exciting things that can happen to a person, and that is the purchase of a home. That's what we're here to discuss, homeownership and how best to help people buy a home and what is it like to be someone who wonders about homeownership and the struggles of trying to figure out all the fine print and how to get something done. That's what we're really here to talk about.

But before we do, I want to thank Mary Frances Reilly of the YMCA for her—[*applause*]. Mary Frances told me she was a runner. I told her I used to be a runner. [*Laughter*] Turns out, when you get older it's kind of hard to run a lot, isn't it, Mary Frances? But thank you for your hospitality. I'm so grateful you're here.

I want to thank my friend Alphonso Jackson, who is the Acting Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. That means he's waiting for Senate confirmation, which I'm confident the Senate will do soon. Where are you, Alphonso? There he is. Thanks for coming. I'm glad you're here.

Alphonso and I have set a job: We want to close the minority homeownership gap in America; we want more people owning their own home; and we want more of our minorities owning their own home as well. We think it's in the best interests of the country that more people own something. When you own something you call your own, you have a vital stake in the future of our Nation. So we've set this goal, and we'll talk about some ways how to achieve this goal. But Alphonso is the right man for the job. He's run housing authorities before. He knows what he's doing. The Senate needs to get him in there pretty quick.

Speaking about Senators, I'm honored that Senator Arlen Specter is with me today. Arlen, thank you for coming. I consider Arlen Specter an ally and a friend. Oh, he doesn't do everything you ask him to do all the time, but when you need him, he's there. He's an independent voice for the great State of Pennsylvania, and he's doing a fine job as a United States Senator. I appreciate you coming.

Jim Gerlach is with us as well—Jim, thanks for coming; I'm proud you're here—as is Congressman Jim Greenwood. Jim, thanks for coming. It's good to see both of the Congressmen. Thanks for taking your time out.

I see that Chairman Jim Matthews is with us. Chairman, I'm glad you're here. He is the smart brother. [*Laughter*] Well, it's an inside joke.

I appreciate other county commissioners being here. Commissioner Ellis and State and local officials. And thank you all for coming.

Before we begin a little talk about the economy and homeownership, I do want to make mention of a fellow named Robert Bright. Robert, where are you? There he is. Thank you for coming, Robert. You don't know Robert. I didn't know him until I landed at the airport. He is a mentor. He is what I call a soldier in the army of compassion. You know, a lot of times we talk about the strength of our country being our military—and that is part of the strength of the country, and we intend to keep the military strong—or the fact that we're a wealthy nation, and that's important. But the true strength of the country is the heart and souls of our citizens. It's really the true strength of America, the fact that there are people who are willing to take time out of their life to volunteer, to save a life, or to make sure a child has got a better future.

Robert has been a mentor at Big Brothers and Big Sisters. He knows what I know, that you can change our country one heart and one soul at a time, that Government is not a loving organization. It's an organization of law and justice, but love emanates in our hearts. And the reason I've asked Robert to come to introduce him is because I encourage anybody who wants to serve their country to do—to mentor a child or to be involved with the YMCA or to get involved with the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, to make a difference by taking time out of your life to help heal a soul that hurts. Robert, thanks for the

example you've set, and thanks for coming today.

I hope you can tell that I'm an optimistic fellow, because—and one reason why is because I've seen what this country has been through. We went through a recession and a stock market decline. We went through an attack. We got attacked by a bunch of cold-blooded killers, and the attack hurt. It hurt our psyche because we thought oceans could protect us. It hurt the fact—we lost a million jobs after September the 11th.

But we're a strong nation, and we're a resilient nation. We began to recover. And then we discovered another thing that was harmful to economic growth and vitality and confidence, and that is we had some people who didn't tell the truth that were running corporations in America. We had some CEOs that weren't honest with their shareholders and their employees. And we passed tough laws that said, "We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America." You're now beginning to see on your TV screens what we're talking about. People are being held to account. And that hurt our economy.

And then, as you know, I made a very difficult decision, but the right decision, to secure our country by holding Saddam Hussein to account. But nevertheless, we had the—if you remember, we had on our TV screens the phrase "March to War." Any time a nation is marching to war, it's not conducive for confident thinking. Nobody wants to march to war. It's a negative thought. Now we're marching to peace, by the way. We're on our way to—[*applause*].

But it was tough times, and yet we're growing. The economy is strong and getting stronger. The manufacturing report today was very positive, another indication of the economy strengthening. Unemployment is dropping here in the State of Pennsylvania. There are still people looking for work, make no mistake about it, but it's getting better. Interest rates are low, which is important if you're a first-time homebuyer. Inflation is down, which is important. We're going to keep working on jobs.

One thing we're not going to do is get ourselves isolated from the world. I will fight off economic isolationism, which would be bad for job creation here in the State of Pennsylvania.

But we've overcome a lot, and that's why I'm optimistic. We've overcome a lot because we've got people who refuse to be intimidated by terrorists. We've overcome a lot because of a tax policy that left money—more money in the hands of the people that earned it. And when you've got more money in your pocket, you go out and demand an additional good or a service. And when somebody demands a good or a service, in our economy, somebody produces the good or a service. And when somebody makes that good or a service, it means somebody is likely to keep a job or find work.

The tax policies we passed made a lot of sense, and there's more to do. The first thing that Congress needs to do is not take that tax relief away from the people and not raise the taxes on the people. I don't know if you followed this debate that we're having up there in the Nation's Capital right now—or down there in the Nation's Capital; I'm used to saying up there in the Nation's Capital—if Congress doesn't act, the child credit is going to go down, which is raising taxes on the people with children. If the Congress doesn't act, the marriage penalty is going up. By the way, it doesn't make any sense to penalize marriage in the Tax Code. We ought to be encouraging marriage, not penalizing marriage in our Tax Code. If the Congress doesn't act, they're going to be raising the taxes on people who work, and it makes no sense.

There's other things we need to do as well. We need to worry about the cost of health care. Small businesses need to be able to pool their—be able to pool risk with association health care plans, so their employees can have more affordable health care. We need to expand health savings accounts. We need medical liability reform in Washington, DC. We need an energy bill. It's hard to be a manufacturer in the State of Pennsylvania if you're worried about where your next energy is coming from. And we need a bill.

There's a lot of things we need to do in Washington to make sure that this economy continues to grow and people can find work. And one of the things we need to do is to continue with good housing policy. And that's

what we're here to talk about today. Homeownership in America is at the highest rate ever. It's a fantastic statement to say that, isn't it? Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. That means there's more people ever in our history are able to say, "I own something. I own my own home."

I went to Pearl's home, and it was pretty special—really special, wasn't it? She said, "This is my home." When I walked up the stairs, she didn't say this is anybody else's home but her home. She said, "Would you come into my home, please. Would you come in and meet my four children in our home." And it was a fantastic experience to come to a first-time homeowners's home and visit with her family. It made me feel good. It made her feel nervous. She hadn't seen that many automobiles on her street. [*Laughter*]

But she was great, and it was wonderful to see. We're going to talk to Pearl in a minute about how she made the decision to buy a home. See, if somebody is listening to this program, I want you to listen to Pearl's story. Probably in her mind, she never was going to ever own a home until something happened. There are some things we can do in Government policy to help people own a home.

One of the things we can do is to help people with the downpayment. A lot of people say, "I want to own a home," and then they get looking at the downpayment, and they realize they can't even get beyond the downpayment phase. And so we passed a good law out of the United States Congress to help people with their downpayments. That money will start to be disbursed soon, with a program such as Genesis, to help people with the downpayment.

The other thing we can do, and you're going to hear some stories today about how these housing counselors help people get beyond the fear of signing a contract full of small print. I mean, if you've never owned a home and you're looking at these contracts, it's a little intimidating. If you think that the President coming to your house is intimidating, wait until you look at one of those contracts, isn't that right?

And so we're going to talk about a program that we've instituted through HUD that helps with educating people. And Nikki is going to talk to us about that in a second. I believe Congress ought to pass tax credits to encourage homebuilding, affordable homes in areas that need affordable homes.

We've set a grand goal. We want to close the minority homeownership gap, and there are three practical ways to encourage the construction of a home and to help homebuyers buy a home. I readily concede there's nothing like low interest rates to stimulate homeownership. And so I suggest that people listening out there, if you're interested in buying a home, take advantage of the low rates. Take advantage of those low rates. Lock in good, low mortgages to make your future so bright.

Nikki Holcroft is with us today. Nikki, tell us what you do. Thank you for coming. Nikki is a sweet soul who cares deeply about the people she's helping.

[*At this point, Ms. Holcroft, housing counselor, Genesis Housing Corp., Lansdale, PA, made brief remarks.*]

The President. You might have more than one customer out there, you know? [*Laughter*]

One of the things, as I said, we emphasize is counseling services. It sounds like kind of a simple thing, but it's a profound opportunity for help. And you'll hear from Pearl. Are you about ready? [*Laughter*]

Pearl Cerdan. Yes, sir.

The President. How many kids have you got?

Ms. Cerdan. I have six, but four of them are with me.

The President. Yes, I met them all. How many cats?

Ms. Cerdan. One.

The President. I met it. [*Laughter*] When did you start thinking about buying a home?

Ms. Cerdan. Well, like Nikki said, I had—about 3½ years ago, I had started. I was thinking then, but it was only a thought. And then I came back——

The President. Was it a dream or a thought?

Ms. Cerdan. Well, at first it was a thought, but then it became a dream.

The President. I got you.

Ms. Cerdan. Did I say that right? [*Laughter*]

The President. It's your dream. It's not ours. [*Laughter*] You're doing great.

[*Ms. Cerdan, first-time homebuyer, Ardmore, PA, made further remarks.*]

The President. Now, Judy is the cofounder of Genesis. Is that an accurate statement?

Judy Memberg. Yes, it is.

The President. She's a social entrepreneur.

Ms. Memberg. I've never been called that, but okay. [*Laughter*]

The President. It's a plus.

Ms. Memberg. Sounds good. [*Laughter*]

The President. Why don't you tell us how you got the idea and talk about Genesis right quick.

[*Ms. Memberg, refinancer and executive director, Genesis Housing Corp., Norristown, PA, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Right. It's interesting, this Ardmore project was on an abandoned filling station.

Ms. Memberg. Yes, it was.

The President. And you got brownfield money.

Ms. Memberg. Yes, there were some environmental problems with gasoline in the soil that had to be cleaned up. And there was some funding that made that available, because anytime you get into environmental problems, it gets very expensive.

The President. Right. And so when did you see the house you're going to buy?

Ms. Cerdan. When did I see it?

The President. Yes, first see it.

Ms. Cerdan. The first time I'd seen it was I think, like July.

The President. Really?

Ms. Cerdan. Yes, sir.

The President. And you bought it in——

Ms. Cerdan. December the 16th of 2003.

The President. Fantastic—homeowner.

Penny is with us. Penny, you're in the process of buying a home. Is that accurate?

Penny Wolk. That's accurate, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, let her go. [*Laughter*] Tell us about yourself, please, ma'am.

[*Ms. Wolk, potential homebuyer, Norristown, PA, made brief remarks.*]

The President. And so where are we in the process? Judy, maybe you can give us a hand here?

Ms. Memberg. Penny is going to be one of the buyers in the second phase of the project, and there's four more houses are going to be built, and she should be signing an agreement of sale in about 2 weeks.

The President. Good. Explain what it's like to be somebody who wants to buy a home, and you're kind of lost, I guess, in the process, is maybe a good way to say it. What does Genesis do, how do they—if somebody is listening out there that probably is in your position——

Ms. Holcroft. What does Genesis do?

The President. Yes, how do you find out how to——

[*Ms. Holcroft made further remarks.*]

The President. You can't live in a home unless you've got somebody who is willing to build them. And Scott Cannon is a homebuilder. He's the president of Cannon Custom Homes.

Scott Cannon. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Did you bring your family with you—I can see. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Cannon. I've got the family here.

The President. Tell us about your business. Tell us about what it's like to be a homebuilder in the Philadelphia area.

[*Mr. Cannon made brief remarks.*]

The President. One of the things we were talking about backstage was the—about how if there is a local forum, that ought to be good enough for the Federal Government, I guess is the country-boy way of summarizing what we're talking about. And that's beginning to happen.

Mr. Cannon. I haven't seen it yet.

The President. Well, it should be happening. I mean, it's supposed to be happening soon, is what I understand. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Cannon. To a theater near you. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's right. How about tort reform? You could use a little tort reform, couldn't you?

Mr. Cannon. Well, we could use tort reform, sure—the class-action lawsuits and things like that that we truly do fear, of course. But again, that's just a cost that we pass on to Pearl and Penny. It's not something that—really you're not coming after me. I just have to pay more for insurance, and I pass it on to the homebuyer.

The President. No, that's exactly right. Are you building any homes these days?

Mr. Cannon. Yes, we're building a few. We've had a challenge the last year or so with the weather, but things are going good.

The President. Well, I might be able to do something with the bureaucracy, but—[*laughter*].

Mr. Cannon. That would be enough. [*Laughter*] We'll deal with the weather.

The President. Judy, you got anything else you want to share with anybody who might be listening out there about buying a home?

Ms. Memberg. I think the thing that's really important is that with housing counseling, anyone can put together a plan on how they can become a homebuyer. Some people, it's a very short process; some people are very familiar with being homeowners or their family has been homeowners. But a lot of people who, if their parents aren't homeowners, really don't know where to start. And a good housing counseling agency can really guide you through that process.

The President. Right. And I presume there's a lot of housing counseling agencies around the area?

Ms. Memberg. There are a few. There are many in Philadelphia. There are a few in Montgomery County. But there's a lot of good counselors out there to find one that matches up with your need.

The President. Good. Well, listen, if somebody's listening, I hope, and are interested in buying a home, there's opportunity here in this part of the world. You've heard two ladies say that they've been able to overcome the fears of homeownership and kind of the mental blocks associated with homeownership, because they were able to receive counseling. And the counseling is available. We want more people owning their home. That's what we want. We want you to feel comfortable about coming—thinking about buying your own home so that when somebody knocks on your door, you open that door and say, "Welcome to my home," just like this good lady did to me today.

Listen, thank you all for coming. It's been a joy to be here. I want to thank you for your stories. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. at the Main Line YMCA. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Frances Reilly, executive director, Main Line YMCA; James R. Matthews, chairman, and Thomas Jay Ellis, commissioner, Montgomery County Commission, Montgomery County, PA; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands and an Exchange With Reporters

March 16, 2004

President Bush. Here's what we're going to do. We'll have a couple opening statements. I'll call upon an American press; the Prime Minister will call upon somebody from the Dutch press; American press; Dutch press; and that's it. Thank you all for coming.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. I'm glad you're back. Thank you for a—your friendship. Thank you for your clear understanding about the need for us to work together to achieve a more free and peaceful world. I appreciate our bilateral relations are strong. We had a wide-ranging discussion, talking about a variety of issues, whether it be foreign policy or the economy. It was a good, frank discussion, and I appreciate my friend being here again. Welcome.

Prime Minister Balkenende. George, thanks again for the hospitality. We had, indeed, a very good discussion. We talked about issues around Iraq, the role of the United Nations, by example. We talked about the cooperation in the economic sphere, developments in Afghanistan. We also talked about values in society, an important issue. And especially, we talked about terrorism, the fight against terrorism, and it is important that the world society, international community, stands shoulder to shoulder and shows

its solidarity to fight against these terrible attacks. And we share that same view, and we will work together, also, in the second half of this year, when the Netherlands is taking over the Presidency of the European Union.

President Bush. Yes.

We'll answer a couple questions here. We'll start with you, Terry Hunt [Associated Press].

Implications of Terrorist Attack in Spain

Q. Thank you, sir. Mr. President, do you think terrorists have reason to believe that they can influence elections and policy, given the outcome of what happened in Spain?

President Bush. I think terrorists will kill innocent life in order to try to get the world to cower. I think—these are coldblooded killers. I mean, they'll kill innocent people to try to shake our will. That's what they want to do, and they'll never shake the will of the United States. We understand the stakes, and we will work with our friends to bring justice to the terrorists.

They have not only killed in Spain; they've killed in the United States; they've killed in Turkey; they've killed in Saudi Arabia. They kill wherever they can. And it's essential that the free world remain strong and resolute and determined.

Want to call on somebody from your press?

Iraq

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. President, according to opinion polls, most Dutch people want to withdraw the Dutch troops from Iraq. Many Dutch people think the war in Iraq has little to do with the war against terrorism and may actually encourage terrorism. How would you respond to those Dutch people who want to withdraw?

President Bush. I would ask them to think about the Iraqi citizens who don't want people to withdraw, because they want to be free. And I would remind the Dutch citizens that Al Qaida has an interest in Iraq for a reason, and that interest is, they realize this is a front in the war on terror, and they fear the spread of freedom and democracy in places like the greater Middle East. They can't stand the thought of free societies springing up in the Middle East, because they understand a free society is against their very wishes. And so it's essential that we remain side by side with the Iraqi people as they begin the process of self-government.

And we're making good progress. The basic law that was written by the Governing Council was a substantial piece of work that talked about freedoms, the very same freedoms that we honor in America or in the Netherlands. And it's essential that we help Iraq—and Afghanistan—develop into free societies, which in itself will start changing the regions in which they exist.

Adam, [Adam Entous, Reuters] yes.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. You're looking fine today, Adam, but the tie—[*laughter*].

2004 Election

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Candidate Kerry has suggested he has support of world leaders. Do you think he should—that should be a factor in the campaign? Was that an appropriate thing for him to say?

President Bush. I think it's—if you're going to make an accusation in the course of a Presidential campaign, you ought to back it up with facts.

Prime Minister Balkenende. I won't talk about that issue.

President Bush. Okay, fine.

Prime Minister Balkenende. It has to do with the campaign here in the United States.

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, have you convinced the Prime Minister of the Netherlands to leave the Dutch troops in Iraq?

President Bush. The Prime Minister will make a—the appropriate decision. It's his decision to make. We both agree that a free Iraq is essential to a peaceful world. We both understand the stakes. We both know that Al Qaida is interested in fighting us in Iraq. How do we know? We know because they've said so publicly. Al Qaida understands the stakes. Al Qaida wants us out of Iraq, because Al Qaida wants to use Iraq as an example of defeating freedom and democracy. And so the Prime Minister has got issues at home that he'll deal with, but there's no doubt that he understands the stakes and the historic opportunity with which we're faced.

Prime Minister Balkenende. It's good to add that we did not talk about the situation after the half of July. That is the responsibility of the Dutch Government and Dutch Parliament, and we'll talk about it, as I made it clear already, earlier. But I think it's very good to look always to the situation of the Iraq people and the international struggle against terrorism. Therefore, it's so important that countries are working together, and they can draw the same lines. That's very important, but it has nothing to, at this moment, to the decisionmaking as far as the situation after the first of July is concerned.

President Bush. Thanks, good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks in a Discussion on Health Care Access

March 16, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. What you're about to hear is a discussion about how to make sure America's economy continues to grow and practical ways to help employers and employees to grow the economy, make the right decisions. That's what we're here to discuss. It's an economic lesson. But we're not using Ph.D.'s. Well, we're using Ph.D.'s in the sense that we're talking to entrepreneurs who are on the frontline of making capital decisions every day, and decisions of—big decisions for each person they hire. That's what we're here to discuss.

But before we do, I want to thank the Chamber for allowing us to use this fantastic facility. It's a short drive from the White House, and it's a beautiful place. So thank you very much for letting us be here.

I noticed I've got some of my friends from the Congress here. Sam Johnson from the great State of Texas, I appreciate you coming, Sam. Congresswoman Katherine Harris from Florida, thank you for coming, Katherine.

Yesterday, I had the fortune of being in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, to talk about homeownership. It turns out that one of the fantastic statistics and one of the realities of our society today is more people own homes than ever before. And Congressman Jim Greenwood traveled with me yesterday. He is here today. He is here not because he particularly likes to hear his President talk. He is here because he is the author of the national medical liability reform law. And I appreciate you coming, Jim, and thank you for being here.

I want to thank all the small-business owners who are here. Thank you for being dreamers and doers and employers. Thank you for taking risk, and thank you for following your heart. I mean, I love the entrepreneurial spirit of America. It's an incredibly important part of our country and our future. You see, the role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish. And we've got a lot of small-business owners here today, and I want to thank you for following your dreams.

I want to thank the local community leaders who are here. I hope you're as optimistic as I am about the future of this country. The reason I am is because I know what we've overcome. We've overcome a lot. We've overcome a recession. We've overcome an attack on our country, an attack which, by the way, not only affected our spirit, it affected our economy. They estimate over a million jobs were lost after the attacks of September the 11th. We overcame that, those attacks, because of the resolve of the American people. The American people refused to be intimidated by coldblooded killers. We refused then to be intimidated. We refuse now to ever be intimidated by coldblooded killers.

And then we had a problem in our society in that we've had some people that were—positions of responsibility didn't tell the truth. You might remember the corporate scandals. That affected the psychology of the country. A capitalist system requires trust. If you're going to invest, you need to trust the numbers. If you're an employee, you need to trust your employers. And yet, unfortunately, there was some citizenry that forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen, and they didn't tell the truth.

But we passed tough laws. I want to thank the people from the Congress here to help pass those laws. It is now clear we were not

going to tolerate any dishonesty in the boardrooms of our country. People will be held to account. And we overcame that.

And then, as you know, I made a tough decision about keeping our word and about making this country secure and the world more peaceful, and we went to war. And I committed, along with other nations, brave sons and daughters of our respective countries to deal with the tyrant who refused to yield to the demands of the world. And now he sits in a jail cell, and Iraq is free.

We marched to war, which affected the economy. It's hard to be confident about the future when you look on your TV screens and you see the banner, "March to War." As decisionmakers and entrepreneurs, it had to be an unsettling time to plan for the future, when you've got a country marching to war. Now we're marching to peace. We're marching to peace. A free Iraq is going to help change the world. A free Afghanistan is changing the world. The world is becoming more peaceful.

In other words, we've overcome a lot, and the statistics show it. We're growing. Our economy is the strongest of all the major industrialized nations. It's a growing economy. I just mentioned homeownership. We've got more people owning their home than ever before. We're closing the—there's more minority homeownership in America. And that's what we want. We want people owning something. We not only want them owning their own business; we want people owning their own home and owning and managing their own health care accounts as well. We're going to discuss that in a second.

The interest rates are low, and inflation is low. We had a great report yesterday on the manufacturing sector. Things are looking up, but there is more to do—there's more to do.

I think one of the reasons why we're doing so well is because we cut the taxes right at the right time. I went to Congress and said, "Look, we've got a problem. We've got some hurdles we've got to overcome. We've got to overcome a recession. We've got to overcome attacks. We've got to overcome all the things you heard about." And Congress responded, thankfully, and passed robust tax relief. We cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes. We increased the child care—the child credit to help people with families. We reduced the marriage penalty. By the way, it doesn't make any sense to penalize marriage in the Tax Code. We ought to be encouraging marriage, not penalizing marriage.

And we put the death tax on the road to extinction, which is good for entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers. People say, "Why did you do that?" Well listen, if you're a small-business owner, you ought to be able to leave your assets to whomever you choose. You've worked all your life to realize your dream. You build up your asset base. You build up your company. You pay taxes when you're successful, and then you have to pay taxes again when you die. That doesn't make any sense. We want these owners of businesses to be able to pass them on to whoever they choose to pass them on to, without the Government getting in the way again.

And so we worked hard on good, smart economic policy. And the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, and one of the reasons why is because the tax cuts pertained directly to small-business owners. Most small business are Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. And when you're a Subchapter S or a sole proprietorship, you pay tax at the individual income tax level. So when you hear people say we cut individual income taxes or tax on the rich, really what you ought to put in your mind is these were taxes to help the entrepreneurial class of America. Small businesses benefit. And since most new—most new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes sense to have economic policy directed at the small-business sector. And the entrepreneurial class is expanding, and it's strong, and we're adding new jobs. And there's more to do.

And here's some things we need to do. First, we need to make the tax cuts permanent. If you're a mother or a dad who received tax relief as a result of the child credit and you're beginning to plan for your future, it is unsettling to know that Congress hadn't resolved this issue yet. If they don't make the tax cuts permanent, they're raising the taxes on the hard-working people in America. We need tax relief.

And at the very minimum, Congress needs to make sure that the child credit and the

marriage penalty relief and the 10-percent bracket are made permanent. And I'm calling upon them to do so. Business leaders need permanency in the Tax Code. They don't need to be worried about whether the taxes are going to go up this year or next year. They don't need to be worried about whether or not the deductibility aspect of the tax relief remains steady or not. We need permanence in order to make sure that jobs don't go overseas, for example. We need Tax Code permanence to make sure that job growth is strong here at home.

We need an energy bill. If you're a manufacturer, it's hard to plan if you're worried about your—either your energy costs or whether you're going to have energy at all. Congress needs to get us an energy bill. If they're interested in jobs staying here at home, if they're interested in creating an environment in which we're competitive, we need an energy bill, one that encourages reliability for electricity and one that encourages conservation and helps us become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need less regulations. I suspect—we met with a homeowner—homebuilder yesterday, Congressman. Remember the guy? He was upset that he had to fill out forms at the Federal, State, and local level in order to build a house. But he also made a pretty valid point. He pointed to one of the new homeowners there and said, "By the way, every form I fill out costs me money, and you have to pay." We need regulatory relief. I suspect these businessowners, if they were honest with you, say they spend too much time filling out the forms. And I, frankly, can't assure them that anybody has ever read the form here at the Federal level.

We need to open up markets for U.S. products. See, our markets are pretty well open. Both Republican and Democrat Presidents in the past have said let's keep our markets relatively open for the consumers of the country. Now we've got to make sure that if our markets are relatively open, then others need to open up theirs. It's only fair. So when you hear me talking about trade, really what I'm talking about is, "Let's make sure we're treated fairly. Let's make sure the playing field is level."

We can compete with anybody. At least, I think so. That's why the economic isolationists have it wrong. That's why the people here in Washington—see, that's the message the pessimists send. They say, "We better put up walls and barriers between America and the world, because we can't compete." That's not what I think. I think we can compete with anybody.

My job is to make sure that playing field is level and let the American workers outproduce anybody in the world and let our farmers outplow anybody in the world. We're good at a lot of things, and we ought to be selling our products. Heck, we're 5 percent of the world's population, which means there's 95 percent of the people ready for products that say, "Made in the USA." This administration will reject economic isolationism, for the good of our workers.

And finally, to the point we're here to discuss. In order to make sure America remains a competitive place, in order to make sure that we can expand the job base where people can find work, in order to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit remains strong, we need to address the issue of the cost of health care. The rising cost of health care affects these good folks' ability to hire workers, and we need to address that. I want to talk about some practical ways to address the rising costs of health care.

But first, it's important to understand we have a struggle here in Washington. It's a philosophical struggle. It's the difference between the decisionmakers in health care, who should be the decisionmaker. I believe strongly the decisionmakers ought not to be the Federal Government and Federal bureaucrats. I think the decisionmaker in health care ought to be individuals and employers.

And there's a philosophical divide, and it's part of the debate. The debate is whether or not the marketplace ought to have a function in determining the cost of health care or whether or not the Federal Government ought to make all decisions. I've made my stand. I believe that the best health care policy is one that trusts and empowers consumers and one that understands the market.

Now, there are some things the Federal Government has got to do to make sure health care is reasonable and sound, one of

which is to expand what we call community health centers. In other words, we recognize there are people who have trouble getting health care, and we need to address those needs. And to me an efficient and appropriate way to do so was to expand the number of community health centers, primary care providers, for poor people in the country.

And we've done so. We've opened or expanded 600 centers since 2001. There are 3 million more people now serviced by these community health centers. My goal is to expand—open and expand another 600 by 2006. And I appreciate the Congress working on this. This is a smart way to make sure that health care is delivered to people who can't afford health care. And it's a smart way to get people out of emergency rooms. Many times people go to emergency rooms, which is costly health care, for primary care needs. And community health centers work, and they make a lot of sense.

Secondly, we dealt with Medicare, as you might have heard. This is an issue that had been passed on from Congress to Congress, an issue that people talked about, but nobody wanted to do anything about it. I felt we had an obligation to our seniors, as did Members of the United States Congress, to provide a modern system, a reformed system, a system, frankly, that hadn't been changed much since Lyndon Johnson first introduced Medicare.

And it was high time we put a new system in place, one that said there needs to be prescription drug coverage for our seniors. And after all, if Medicare covers a heart operation that costs a lot of money for the taxpayers, doesn't it make sense to cover the medicine that might prevent the heart operation from having to happen in the first place? And that's a new element involved in Medicare, thanks to the reforms of Congress.

We want our seniors to have choices. There's some people in Washington who resisted that aspect of the Medicare bill because they want the Government making choices for the patients. It's a different way of thinking than our way of thinking. Our way of thinking is, the more choices seniors have, the better the Medicare system will become. And so an inherent part of the Medicare reform was to trust people with their decisions. And so you'll see a much more vibrant private sector involved now with the delivery of services to Medicare patients.

This year we're going to put out a Medicare—a drug discount card for our seniors that will save between 10 to 25 percent off their drugs, which is positive. Next year we're going to have preventive screenings, and the next year the drug benefit will kick in to Medicare. So we've addressed that aspect of medicine.

Thirdly, we passed what's called health savings accounts. You're going to hear an interesting discussion on health savings accounts. Part of the purpose of the discussion is to put meaning behind, like, letters. In Washington you hear, "Oh, we got you HSAs." And the average person out there goes, "Huh? HSA?" So we're going to talk about health savings accounts to explain what they mean.

They basically work this way: You or your employer buys a low-cost insurance policy to cover major medical bills. And what happens, by the way, if you trust the market, if you devolve away from Federal control of health care, then the market begins to respond, and now more insurance companies are beginning to provide policies that provide coverage for major medical.

And then you take that policy and you combine it with an HSA, which means you can contribute money tax-free, that earns interest tax-free, that can be withdrawn tax-free to cover other medical expenses. Now, the advantage of this plan is—the tax-free is an advantage, by the way. If you're putting money in tax-free and it accumulates tax-free and you can take it out tax-free, that's the beginning of a pretty good deal for the individual.

But there's also some other advantages. You're the decisionmaker, not a bureaucrat in an HMO. You get to make the decisions. You get to decide. There's incentive built in to make the right choices in your life. When, all of a sudden, when you see your savings account, it covers your incidental costs, and the major medical, of course, covers the big costs, you begin to make wiser decisions. All of a sudden, it makes sense to start walking five times a week to save money. It's your money, and then it rolls over, and you can build up quite a healthy account.

But the good news as well is this: Inherent in the health savings accounts are savings, savings for employers, savings for employees. In other words, one way to deal with the cost of health care is to push for health savings accounts. You're going to hear an interesting discussion on this today.

Another way to make sure that small businesses can survive and provide care for their employees is through association health plans. These would provide small businesses the same opportunity that big businesses get, and that is the economies of scale, the economies of purchase, the ability to share risk in larger pools, which drives down the cost of health care for small businesses.

These plans are resisted here in Washington by special interests. We're trying to bust through the special interests to make sure that small businesses have got the same advantages of big businesses. And there's some good law passed out of the House of Representatives, stuck in the Senate, like a lot of other things are stuck in the Senate. And they need to get it out, for the sake of controlling health care costs.

You hear a lot of rhetoric in Washington about jobs and job creation and outsourcing. The best way to deal with job creation and outsourcing is to make sure our businesses are competitive here at home. The more competitive we are here at home, the better it is to do business at home, the more likely it is we'll keep jobs here at home. And association health plans is one such way.

And there's another way we can help control the cost of health care. I mentioned Congressman Greenwood. He is fighting the ultimate entrenched interests and special interests, and that is the lawyers who love the fact that you can sue right and left in America. That's what he's fighting. He understands available and affordable health care is affected by frivolous and junk lawsuits. It's an issue—it's a national issue.

When I first came up from the Governor, I said, "We'll just let the States deal with the medical liability reform." And then I saw what the practice of defensive medicine does to our budget. That's—defensive medicine means we're going to practice more medicine than we need to in order to make sure we've got a good case in the court of law when we get sued. See, everybody is getting sued. It's like a giant lottery. "I'm just going to sue and sue and sue, and maybe I'll get lucky and win one of those settlements where I get 40 percent of the take." But it's harming our society. It's harming people who are trying to create jobs, because it's running up the cost of their health care.

And so I took a look at the cost to the Federal Government. Imagine what the Federal Government is paying. We pay Medicaid and Medicare and veterans' health care costs, all of which are affected by the practice of defensive medicine as a result of frivolous lawsuits. And so I said, "Well, let's get to work on this issue. Let's take on the special interests here in Washington, DC."

And Congressman Greenwood stepped up and got a good bill out of the United States Congress. I said, "It's a national problem that desires a—needs a national solution." Congressman Greenwood responded. We basically said, "If you get hurt by a bad doc, you get paid the economic damages." That's fair. That makes sense, but there needs to be a cap on noneconomic damages at $250,000, so the settlements are reasonable, not outrageous. And of course, if there is a need for punitive damages, they've got to be reasonable. And Congressman Greenwood is willing to be reasonable on such an issue.

Medical liability reform will make it easier for people to afford health care, which will make America more competitive a place. It means we're more likely to hire people right here at home. His bill got out of the House. It's stuck in the United States Senate. The trial bar won't let it out. For the sake of good health care, for the sake of job creation, for the sake of expanding—an expanding economy, we need medical liability reform now.

Okay, you've heard enough from me. Roman is with us. Roman, tell us your business. He's from Knoxville, Tennessee. It doesn't sound like it.

Roman Botcharnikov. Well, yes, I'm from Russia originally.

The President. Are you? Raised in Russia?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes.

The President. Born in Russia?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Born and raised there.

The President. Where?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Sochi, it's Black Sea.

The President. Yes, I know Sochi.

Mr. Botcharnikov. It's a resort area. I think you've been there.

The President. No, I haven't been there, but Vladimir Putin called me from there. He's been there. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Botcharnikov. Putin, yes. He's always there.

The President. It's a nice place.

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes, it is.

The President. So when did you come to the States?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Well, I'm a professional coach, actually, and I coach pole vaulting. And I coach American recordholder and silver medal winner at the Sydney Olympic Games.

The President. Really?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes. That's my profession. That's how I end up——

The President. Have you got somebody vaulting in the Olympics this year?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Well, we're getting—we have to upgrade our medal from silver.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Botcharnikov. There's only one way.

The President. That would be gold. [*Laughter*] Okay, so you're a pole vault coach, but you're also a businessman. First of all—let me just—I'm fascinated by knowing this—this is the first I've heard he came from Russia. So what age were you when you came?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Well, I actually went to Australia first when I was 19. Then I lived there for 3 years and then came here in '92.

The President. So at 22 years old.

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes.

The President. Fantastic. Why did you come here?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Well, it's a land of opportunity. The United States is unbelievable country, unbelievable. People all over the world look up to United States and see what's going on here and have the business. You were just talking about products made in USA. All over the world, people want "Made in USA." They do. And everybody dreams to come in here and test—and everybody is allowed—there's a good environment here where entrepreneurs can succeed. I had my business—several businesses actually, kind of expanding and expanding. And how I got in—why we have a hair design studio, which——

The President. Yes, I was wondering about the hair design thing. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes, finally. [*Laughter*] Third attempt. My wife——

The President. Is it wigs or—[*laughter*]—what is your business? Tell us your business, how you started it.

[*Mr. Botcharnikov, business director, Salon Azure, Knoxville, TN, made further remarks.*]

The President. Listen, here's the thing. Here's what people have got to understand. The combination of his premium payments for major medical insurance—major medical means if you have a real expensive problem—plus what he puts into his savings account equals a savings of $200 a month, and yet he gets as good a coverage——

Mr. Botcharnikov. Better.

The President. ——even better coverage. And that's the point. This is a new product. This is a new idea, and people—one of the reasons we're having this discussion is to encourage employers and individuals and employees to look into what's called health savings accounts. They used to be called MSAs; they're now called HSAs.

And I just—again, I repeat Roman's story. He puts 177 in for his insurance, monthly premium. He puts $100 in a month for his savings account. It goes in tax-free. It accumulates interest tax-free. When he withdraws it to pay for medical bills, it's tax-free. If he doesn't use it all, he rolls it over to the next year. It's a savings account to pay for medicine, and yet, he's saving $2,400 a year.

It's an interesting, interesting opportunity, and I want to thank you for describing it.

Mr. Botcharnikov. It is kind of unbelievable to me.

The President. Yes, it is unbelievable, just like America.

Okay, Sandy Calohan is with us. She is the president of Carolina Paper & Builders Materials, Inc. By the way, when you hear her talk, she is a—first of all, there's a lot of female-run businesses in America, which means the country is better off. There's a—the fastest growing component of the entrepreneurial class is women-owned businesses.

They're being created, like, at two times the rate other businesses are, which is a really exciting part about the country. Secondly, she's a Subchapter S corporation. She's part of the rich. You'll hear, "taxing the rich." That means we're going to tax Subchapter S corporations. These are people who are actually hiring people, people who are expanding the job base because they're willing to take risk.

And so—and by the way, just an aside, just to keep everybody's perspective properly focused, when you're running up individual tax rates, you're taxing small businesses just like Sandy.

Welcome.

[*Ms. Calohan made brief remarks.*]

The President. And the—see, what's interesting about how a marketplace works, all of a sudden Sandy bugs her provider, and the provider begins to say, "Well, gosh, maybe there's a demand here for a different kind of product. We'd better get involved. If we want to keep her business, we better come up with a new way to deal with her problems." I think what you're going to find is, is that the more widespread the notion of health savings accounts become, the more carriers will start providing this kind of insurance. That's how a market works. That's in stark contrast to a Government-run policy in which there is no market. It's like, "Here it is, as decided by bureaucracies and/or law."

And I thought it was a very interesting story that you've been bugging the guy for 7 years. A new product becomes available as a result of Government action, which I find pretty interesting, isn't it? I guess it's the tax aspects that required Government action in the first place. But—and all of a sudden, these products are becoming more available, and Sandy has got one. And she is a satisfied customer, but most importantly, so are her employees, I presume?

Ms. Calohan. Yes, we are. It was either—we were going to have to do something because it was—the cost of health insurance was getting prohibitive. We weren't going to be able to have any if we didn't do something.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Calohan. Because I just can't—$100,000 a year is a lot of money for health insurance for 19 people.

The President. For a small business. Yes. The other day—are you going to hire anybody this year? Yes, hope so. Me too. [*Laughter*]

Small businesses are expanding, and one way to help them is so they can control their cost, health care costs. It's a major part of a person's outlook. A small-business owner's outlook is improved when there's a new product available that says, "Gosh, I'm meeting the needs of my employees and also been able to better control costs."

Dan Schmidt is with us. He's the CEO of Mercury Office Supply, St. Paul, Minnesota. How's the weather up there?

Dan Schmidt. Well, it's beautiful. You just got to think of the bright side, ice fishing—the positives.

The President. Yes, okay. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Schmidt. That's the key. You got to be active in winter.

[*Mr. Schmidt made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, you see what he's saying is, what's interesting about this, that one of the great elements about health savings accounts is that all of a sudden the consumer starts being more in charge of the decision-making process. As he said, the consumer can make choices. And when consumers make choices, it then encourages them to start making healthy choices, particularly when you get to save money, when it's like your money on the line.

And remember, you save money. People say, "Well, why would I want to put money aside when it's being paid for me?" Well, the answer is, because the costs of the HMO plans on a monthly basis far exceed the costs of major medical insurance, plus your own savings. In other words, you're saving money, but you're also watching your money grow if you start making healthy choices. People say, "Will there be gaps in coverage?" No. You get the same amount of health care coverage. I presume your employees are not complaining about the fact that they don't get coverage?

Mr. Schmidt. No. And that was one of the key things. We were actually looking at,

can we afford this as a small business? Are we going to have to drop insurance? And morally and ethically, I had to take care of my employees. It's just something that every American should do.

The President. Yes, see, you're part of the responsibility era. You see the responsibility that comes with owning your own small business. I love that sentiment. "I have a moral responsibility to take care of my employees," says Dan. And that's why the country's great, by the way. There's a lot of people who have that great sense of responsibility. That's why it's important to keep the entrepreneurial spirit strong. Small-business owners know that they can't survive without taking care of their employees. It's kind of a necessity, isn't it? Not only do you have a good heart, but there's an economic necessity involved as well.

I want to thank you for coming, Dan. By the way, he's a Subchapter S corporation, which means if Congress doesn't act, they're going to be raising taxes on people like Dan Schmidt. Employers who are looking to expand—he's got 13 employees. I know that's not a lot for some of the people here in Washington, but there are millions of companies that employ 13 people or less. And there's a lot of small businesses. And it's that vibrancy in the private sector that really defines a strong economy. The vibrancy of owning your own business makes people come from Russia with a great dream. And Congress must understand that good policy is necessary to keep these people energized and excited so that the small-business sector is strong. If you've got too much Federal Government intruding into the lives of small business, it's going to make it hard for us to expand the job base.

Now, speaking about people who are interested in expanding the job base, Patty Orzano is with us. Patty, I'm glad you're here. She owns her own business. Isn't that true?

Patty Orzano. I'm a partner with my husband for over 30 years in 7–11 franchises.

The President. In more ways than one. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Orzano. Now—okay—[*laughter*]—I'm the managing partner. [*Laughter*]

The President. I've got that relationship in my household too. [*Laughter*]

Good job, everybody.

Ms. Orzano. Mr. President, I'd like to thank you for coming back to New York last week. New York does love you, and we need you back.

The President. Thank you.

[*Ms. Orzano made brief remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate that. Listen, what you're hearing is the call for help. By the way, Patty is a 7–11 franchisee, owner, pays taxes, by the way, business taxes at the individual income tax rate. So when you hear them talking about, going to run up these—tax the rich, that's who she's talking about, right there.

And she is—wants to stay in business. She wants to expand. She doesn't need the added expenses. She's got huge medical costs already. Perhaps HSAs will help you, but more importantly, AHPs, associated health plans, will, because basically what she's saying is, is that I need to be able to afford—have a basic health care plan, free of mandates, available to my employees, where I can share risk with other small-business owners. That's not too much to ask, is it, to allow small-business owners to have the same benefits as large businesses in America? That's what she's asking for.

And frankly, that's what I'm asking Congress to do, to provide small businesses with the same opportunity that big businesses have. It's a practical way to deal with the costs of health care. It will allow this good lady to feel comfortable about expanding her business and, at the same time, taking care of her employees. The costs of health care, the rising costs of health care, for a lot of reasons, are affecting the ability of the Pattys to be able to be comfortable in her relationship with her employees and expand her business.

And the option, by the way, is not to say, "The Federal Government ought to take it over, take over the health care industry." That would be the absolute wrong prescription. The right prescription is reasonable policy, one of which is associated health plans.

We've got with us the president of R.W. Murray Company, Bill Fairchild. By the way, Subchapter S corporation—he pays tax at the individual income tax level. The rhetoric that

says, "Oh, we're going to raise the taxes on a certain group of people," that's who they're talking about. They're talking about a lot of others as well—don't get me wrong—but small businesses will pay higher taxes. It doesn't make any sense to be raising the taxes on small businesses as we're starting to recover. Seventy percent of new jobs are started by small-business owners. Why would you penalize those who are creating the new jobs? You don't want to be doing that.

Anyway—Bill, welcome. What do you do?

[*Mr. Fairchild made brief remarks.*]

The President. You understand what he's saying is this, is that if you're able to spread risk, it lowers the cost of buying health care. In other words, if an insurance carrier can spread risk across a variety of people or a variety of firms, it makes it more likely his health care goes down. If he's in the market bidding for a health care plan for 26 people, it's a lot different than if you're in the market bidding along with 260,000 people. And that's—by spreading risk, it reduces the cost of health care to him.

That's all we're asking for, is to give small businesses the opportunity to spread risk, not only within the State of Virginia, but he ought to be able to share risk with small contractors in Crawford, Texas, for that matter. What we're interested in is a market working so that people can hire people. That's what we want. That's the public policy ramifications of good health care insurance.

And the option, again, the other alternative you'll hear in Washington is, "All this stuff doesn't work. Let's block this from happening because we want the Federal Government to make all the decisions. We want the Federal Government to be the decider. We want the Federal Government to be the consumer and the provider." And in my judgment, that would be a disaster for small businesses and consumers. It would make the health care cost more likely to go up than go down. It would mean the health care wouldn't modernize like it has been lately, and we wouldn't be on the leading edge of innovative change.

And so good health care policy first has to make a philosophical decision. We have to make this decision: Where do we want the decisionmakers to be? We want the decisionmakers to be right—these people right up here. This is the best health care plan, is when the small-business owners are involved in the market, making decisions best for their employees. The best health care plans are those in which people have control over the decisionmaking process. We've got to trust people to manage their own health care plans.

You heard me talk about homeownership. An ownership society is one that not only encourages small-business ownership and homeownership, but it also encourages the ownership of your own health care plans so you're the decisionmaker. And that will help control the costs, which is a major issue as to whether or not our country remains a competitive place to do business and whether or not people who are looking for a job are able to find one.

I want to thank the entrepreneurs who are here. You're a living example of what is great about America, the fact that you are able to dream and work—[*applause*]. Thank you for being such responsible citizens. Thank you for following your dreams. And thank you for setting such a great example.

May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:37 a.m. at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day, 2004

March 16, 2004

I send greetings to those celebrating St. Patrick's Day.

On March 17th, we honor the remarkable life of Patrick, patron saint of Ireland. He helped bring Christianity to the Irish people. His generosity and love of liberty shaped Ireland's history and culture, and through generations of immigrants, those values have helped shape America.

We are grateful for the many ways Irish-Americans have blessed our country. They have helped to expand our economy, create

our communities, and defend our homeland. Through their public service, they have strengthened our democracy, and their dedication to faith and family has enriched our Nation's character.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a happy St. Patrick's Day.

George W. Bush

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Shamrock Presentation Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland

March 17, 2004

Taoiseach, thank you very much. Thanks for the lovely gift of shamrocks. It is a beautiful symbol of a beautiful land. Laura and I welcome you back to the White House. We're honored to have you join us to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day.

This day is always a happy one for Americans. In some places, Americans get a little too happy. [*Laughter*] Today we reaffirm the bonds of friendship between our countries. We remember a courageous man who preached a gospel of peace. We celebrate a heritage that is claimed by millions of my countrymen. There's an Irish saying that there is luck in sharing. For more than two centuries, your country and mine have shared responsibilities. We've shared aspirations, and we have shared values.

From my Nation's earliest days, Americans of Irish descent have helped to establish and define America's most cherished principles. They've helped to defend the liberty of their adopted homeland. Today, the people of the United States and the people of Ireland continue to share so much. Our economies are more closely linked than ever. Together, we are fighting terrorism, a danger that has brought destruction and grief to Americans and Irish alike and to the world.

I join the *Taoiseach* in sending condolences to the people of Spain as they remembered their murdered countrymen. I thank you for your strong support in our common struggle.

Our nations are also standing for peace and justice in places like the Balkans and Afghanistan and beyond. We share a common vision for Northern Ireland. We seek a lasting peace for the people of Northern Ireland, a peace that will allow people to live free of terror and intimidation.

We seek a region that is stable and prosperous and tolerant and locally governed. I commend Prime Minister Ahern and Prime Minister Blair and all of those who are working so hard to implement the Good Friday Agreement. I call for a permanent end to all political violence. There's no place for paramilitaries in a democratic society. The partnership of America and Ireland is close. It is lasting, and it is important to the peace of the world.

I look forward to this summer to visiting Ireland for the EU and U.S. Summit, to strengthen the essential partnership between the United States and Europe. *Taoiseach*, may the friendship between your people and mine prove as strong in the years to come as it has in the centuries past.

May all the people of our nations have a happy Saint Patrick's Day. We ask God's blessings on the people of Ireland, and may God continue to bless the United States. Welcome.I57NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Ahern.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Assistance Provided to Azerbaijan

March 17, 2004

Dear _____ :

On December 30, 2003, I exercised my authority to extend the waiver of section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, concerning assistance to Azerbaijan. Consistent with paragraph (g)(6) of the heading "Assistance for the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union" in title II of the Kenneth M.

Ludden Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 2002 (Public Law 107–115), I am providing the attached report prepared by my Administration concerning assistance provided pursuant to this waiver. The report describes the status of:

- All training and assistance provided to the Government of Azerbaijan pursuant to the extension of the waiver of section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act;
- The military balance between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the impact of U.S. assistance on that balance; and
- Negotiations for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the impact of U.S. assistance on those negotiations.

My Administration remains fully committed to continue working with the Congress and all concerned parties to bolster peace, prosperity, and freedom in the South Caucasus.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations, and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 18.

Remarks to Military Personnel at Fort Campbell, Kentucky

March 18, 2004

I'm glad to be back. Thanks for having me. Thanks for inviting Laura. I am proud to be here once again with the Screaming Eagles of the 101st, with the Green Berets of the 5th Special Forces Group, and with the Night Stalkers. Many of you have seen action in the global war on terror. Some of you have just returned to Fort Campbell from your deployments. Thank you for a job well done. Welcome home.

Laura and I are honored to be with all the personnel at Fort Campbell and with all the family members who live here. Each one of you serves our Nation by giving your love and support to our soldiers. Here at one of America's vital military bases, you've built a strong community of people who care about each other and share the challenges and rewards of army life. America is grateful. America is proud of our military families.

All who serve at Fort Campbell and all who wear the uniform of the United States are serving at a crucial hour in the history of freedom. In the first war of the 21st century, you're defending your fellow citizens against ruthless enemies, and by your sacrifice, you're making our country more secure. You have delivered justice to many terrorists, and you're keeping the rest of them on the run. You've helped to remove two of the most violent regimes on Earth. With daring and skill and honor, you've held true to the Special Forces motto, "To liberate the oppressed."

America is indebted to you. And we're also indebted to the men and women of the National Guard and the Reserves who are serving abroad and those called up for homeland security assignments. Hundreds of Guard and Reserve units across America have been activated in this time of war. These fine citizens and their families and their employers have put duty first, and our Nation is grateful to them as well.

We've got a lot of veterans with us today, veterans who have served our Armed Forces worldwide and who now live near Fort Campbell. Thank you for the great example you've set for today's soldiers. Thank you for your service to our Nation.

I want to thank General Petraeus for being such a strong leader and a good man. I want to thank General Ellis for being with us today—oh, I forgot. I want to thank Holly Petraeus as well. She has done a—she deeply cares about the men and women from this base. It's clear when you talk to her, she's got a lot of love in her heart.

General Ellis is with us, Commanding General of the U.S. Armed Forces Command. General Ellis, thank you for being here. Today I traveled down from Washington with two Members of the United States Congress who care a lot about the people stationed at Fort Campbell and who live around the Fort Campbell area. That would

be Congressman Ed Whitfield from Kentucky and Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn from Tennessee. Thank you all for coming.

Laura and I regret the fact we didn't get here in time for the entertainment. We want to thank Lane Brody and Mark Wills and Darryl Worley and Jaci Velasquez, for your work, your care, and your support of the United States military.

I had the privilege of saying hello to a fellow named Billy Colwell. Billy has, by the way, served for 20 years in the 101st. He served our Nation, doing two tours of duty in Vietnam. You're probably wondering why I'm bringing up Billy. I'll tell you why. A lot of times, people say, "Well, America is strong because of our military." And that's one reason we're strong, and by the way, we're going to keep our military strong. Or they say, "Well, we're strong because we've got a great economy." And the economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. But the true reason we're strong is because of the hearts and souls of the American people. That's why we're strong. We're a compassionate, decent country, where neighbors care for neighbors.

Billy volunteers at the Fort Campbell YMCA. He takes time out of his life to help junior enlisted officers or people who are getting deployed. Billy is there to help welcome people home and to wish people well as they leave. Billy takes time out of his life to love a neighbor just like you would like to be loved yourself. No, the strength of this country is the fact that we've got citizens from all walks of life who care deeply about our fellow citizens. Billy, thank you for your service. Thank you for what you do.

Fort Campbell was the first Army post I visited in the weeks after our country was attacked. It was around Thanksgiving. I will never forget eating turkey with the Screaming Eagles. I remember telling you that the men and women of Fort Campbell—that you once again had a rendezvous with destiny. That's what I said when I was here last. And when the orders came, you carried out your missions. You made history once again.

Since we last met, you deployed over 5,000 vehicles, 254 aircraft, and 18,000 soldiers in Kuwait, in the fastest deployment in the history of the 101st. Since we last met, the 101st liberated the cities of Najaf, Karbala, and Hilla. You secured southern Baghdad and sent 1,600 soldiers by helicopter to Mosul in the longest air assault in military history. Since we last met, the sons of the dictator went into hiding, until they were found and dealt with by the 101st and Special Operations.

Since we last met, soldiers from Fort Campbell have helped to organize the first truly free local election in Iraq in 30 years. Since we last met, you helped to build medical clinics and to rebuild schools. By your decency and compassion, you are helping the Iraqi people to reclaim their country. Because you care, you're helping the Iraqis live as free people.

One year ago tomorrow, the Armed Forces of the United States entered Iraq to end the regime of Saddam Hussein. After his years of defiance, we gave the dictator one final chance. He refused. And so in one year's time, Saddam Hussein has gone from a palace to a bunker to a spider hole to jail.

Because America and our allies acted, one of the most evil, brutal regimes in history is gone forever. The dictator of Iraq committed many atrocities, and he had many more in mind. This was a regime that tortured children in front of their parents. This was a regime that used chemical weapons against whole villages. This was a country in which millions of people lived in fear and many thousands disappeared into mass graves. That was the life in Iraq for more than a generation until the Americans arrived. Because America and our allies acted, a state sponsor of terror was put out of business. The Iraqi regime gave cash rewards to the families of suicide bombers and sheltered terrorist groups. But all that's over. When Saddam Hussein went down, the terrorists lost an ally forever. Because America and our allies acted, an aggressive threat to the security of the Middle East and to the peace of the world is now gone.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and

they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. I had a choice to make, either take the word of a madman or take such threats seriously and defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

Because America and our allies acted, it is clear to everyone, when America makes a pledge, we keep our word. By speaking clearly, by speaking consistently, and by meaning what we say, it is more likely the world will be more peaceful. Because America and our allies acted, all the world is now seeing democracy rising in the heart of the Middle East. A year ago, Iraq was ruled by the whims of one cruel man. Today, Iraq has a new interim law that guarantees basic rights for all, freedom of religion, the right to cast a secret ballot, and equality under the law. And these historic changes are sending a message across the region from Damascus to Tehran: Freedom is the future of every nation.

The Iraqi people are achieving great things and serving and sacrificing for their own future. Today, more than 200,000 Iraqis, including 78,000 new police, are protecting their fellow citizens. They're building a country that is strong and free, and America is proud to stand with them. All over Iraq today, as that nation moves closer to self-government, Iraqis can be certain that in the United States of America, they have a faithful friend. And our military—and in our military, they're seeing the good heart of America.

They see people like PFC Amanda Thompson Cummings, who volunteered to serve in Iraq. She's an Army cook who also works on security patrol. She said this to a reporter: "They know I can shoot. I'm one of the best in my battalion. But hey, I'm a redneck, what do you expect?" [*Laughter*] Those are her words, not mine. [*Laughter*]

This soldier also describes how the children of Iraq look at her, especially the young girls. As Amanda puts it, "When those girls look at a female soldier, they think, 'Maybe I can be something, too.'" PFC Cummings says, "We made a difference in their lives. And their faces, when they looked at us, that made it all worthwhile right there."

Soldiers of Fort Campbell, every one of you is making a difference. You've seen hard duty, and the defense of freedom is always worth it. Because of your service, because of your bravery, because of your dedication, the world is better off, and the American people are more secure.

You have done your duty. America owes those who do their duty—our military—our gratitude. We owe you more than gratitude. We also owe you the material support you need to do your job. As Commander in Chief, I've been proud to sign into law three pay increases for the military. You deserved every one. We've increased support for base housing and schools. We have a duty in Washington, DC, to make sure our families are taken care of.

Our military has had strong supporters in the House and the Senate. I want to thank the Congress for standing up. I want to thank every Member of Congress who voted in favor of the $87 billion supplemental that is meeting the needs of our troops in the field right now. When your Government gives you a mission, we must accept serious responsibility of our own. And here's my pledge: I'll work to make sure you have every resource and every tool you need to fight and win the war on terror.

The war continues. It's a different kind of war, but it goes on. As we saw again yesterday, the terrorists are fighting desperately to undermine Iraq's progress toward freedom. That attack showed once again the cruelty of our enemies. The terrorists and Ba'athist holdouts know that a free and stable Iraq will be a major defeat to the cause of hatred and terror. They can't stand the thought of a free society. They know that the rise of democracy and hope in the Middle East will mean the decline of their appeal and influence. So the terrorists understand that Iraq is the central front in the war on terror. They're testing our will, and day by day they are learning, our will is firm. Their cause will fail. We will stay on the offensive. Whatever it takes, we will seek and find and destroy the terrorists so that we do not have to face them in our own country.

Not long ago, we intercepted a planning document being sent to the leaders of Al Qaida by a terrorist named Zarqawi. He's in

Iraq. Along with the usual threats, he had a complaint. "Our enemy," said Zarqawi, "is growing stronger, and his intelligence data are increasing day by day. This is suffocation." Zarqawi is getting the idea. For the terrorists in Iraq, we are making sure there is less oxygen every day.

The terrorists hate and target a free Afghanistan and a free Iraq. They also hate and target every country that stands for democracy and tolerance and freedom in the world. The murders in Madrid have revealed once again the agenda and the nature of the terrorist enemy. They kill the innocent. They kill children and their mothers on a commuter train, without conscience, without mercy. They cause suffering and grief, and they rejoice in it. This terrorist enemy will never be appeased, because death is their banner and their cause.

There is no safety for any nation in a world that lives at the mercy of gangsters and mass murderers. Eventually, there's no place to hide from the planted bombs or the far worse weapons that terrorists seek. For the civilized world, there's only one path to safety: We will stay united, and we will fight until this enemy is broken.

The United States is committed to defeating terrorism around the world. It's a solemn commitment. We lead in this cause. We're fighting in this cause, and we are sacrificing in this cause. The 101st Airborne has known greater losses than any other division-sized unit. Each of these Americans brought pride to our country. We pray for their families. We will honor their names forever.

The 101st Airborne Division has earned its place in the history of our country. Sixty years ago, on the night before D-day, General Eisenhower went down to the airfield where the 101st was loading into C-47s for their flight to Normandy. Eisenhower told the men not to worry because they had the best leaders and equipment. One of them looked at him and said, "Hell, General, we ain't worried. It's Hitler's turn to worry." That spirit carried the American soldier across Europe to help liberate a continent. It's the same spirit that carried you across Iraq to set a nation free.

Like your fathers and grandfathers before you, you have liberated millions from oppression. You've added to the momentum of freedom across the world. You have helped keep America safe. You make us all proud to be Americans, and you have made me proud to be your Commander in Chief.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. on the 101st Airborne Division Parade Field. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, Commanding General, 101st Airborne Division and Fort Campbell, and his wife, Holly; Gen. Larry R. Ellis, USA, Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces Command; and entertainers Lane Brody, Mark Wills, Darryl Worley, and Jaci Velasquez.

Executive Order 13333—Amending Executive Order 13257 To Implement the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003

March 18, 2004

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7101 *et seq.*) (the "Act"), as amended by the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–193), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, it is hereby ordered that Executive Order 13257 of February 13, 2002, is amended as follows:

Section 1. The preamble is amended by: (a) deleting "7103" and inserting in lieu thereof "7101 *et seq.*"; and (b) after the phrase "(the "Act")," inserting "and section 301 of title 3, United States Code,".

Sec. 2. Section 4 is redesignated as section 8.

Sec. 3. After section 3, the following new sections are added:

"***Sec. 4.*** *Guidelines, Policies, and Regulations.* (a) The Senior Policy Operating Group (SPOG), described in subsection 105(f) of the Act, shall (i) establish guidelines and policies to coordinate the activities of executive branch departments and agencies regarding policies (including grants and grant policies)

involving the international trafficking in persons and (ii) advise the Secretary of State what regulations may be necessary to implement section 105 of the Act, including such regulations as may be necessary to carry out the sharing of information on all matters relating to grants, grant policies, or other significant actions regarding the international trafficking in persons as set forth in subsection 105(f)(4) of the Act, to the extent permitted by law.

(b) The Secretary of State, in consultation with the members of the Task Force or their representatives, shall promulgate regulations to implement section 105 of the Act.

Sec. 5. *Enhanced Prevention of Trafficking in Persons.* (a) The Secretary of State, in consultation with the members of the Task Force or their representatives, shall carry out the functions under subsection 106(c) and subsection 106(d) of the Act.

(b) The Secretary of State shall have the authority to determine, under section 106(e)(1) of the Act, foreign destinations where sex tourism is significant. The Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the members of the Task Force or their representatives and appropriate officials of the Departments of Commerce and Transportation, shall carry out all other functions under subsection 106(e) of the Act, including promulgation of any appropriate regulations relating to the distribution of the materials described in subsection 106(e).

(c) The head of each executive branch agency responsible for the establishment and conduct of initiatives and programs described in subsections 106(a) through (e) of the Act shall consult with appropriate nongovernmental organizations consistent with section 106(f) of the Act.

(d) The Secretary of State shall have responsibility to initiate appropriate regulatory implementation of the requirements set out in section 106(g) of the Act with respect to contracts, including proposing appropriate amendments to the Federal Acquisition Regulation. Each affected executive branch department or agency shall implement, within that department or agency, the requirements set out in section 106(g) of the Act with respect to grants and cooperative agreements.

Sec. 6. *Research on Trafficking in Persons.* The entities named in section 112A of the Act shall carry out the research initiatives required by section 112A of the Act, and shall award grants according to such policies and guidelines as may be established by the SPOG described in section 105(f) of the Act, as well as any applicable agency rules and regulations.

Sec. 7. *Guidance for Exercising Authority and Performing Duties.* In exercising authority delegated by, or performing functions assigned in, this order, officers of the United States shall ensure that all actions taken by them are consistent with the President's constitutional authority to:

(a) conduct the foreign affairs of the United States;

(b) withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the foreign relations, the national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties;

(c) recommend for congressional consideration such measures as the President may judge necessary or expedient; and

(d) supervise the unitary Executive Branch."

Sec. 4. *Judicial Review.* This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, entities, officers, employees or agents, or any other person.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 18, 2004.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 22, 2004]

NOTE: This Executive order will be published in the *Federal Register* on March 23.

Memorandum on Delegation of Certain Authority Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, Public Law 108–136

March 18, 2004

Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security

Subject: Delegation of Certain Authority Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, Public Law 108–136

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby delegate to you the functions and authority conferred upon the President by section 1034 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 (Public Law 108–136) to provide the specified report to the Congress. In addition, I direct you to coordinate with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Transportation regarding the contents of this report.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 19, 2004]

NOTE: This memorandum was published in the *Federal Register* on March 22.

Remarks on the Anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom

March 19, 2004

Good morning and thanks for coming. Laura and I are pleased to welcome you all to the White House. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. Members of my National Security Council are here, members of the administration, members of our Armed Forces, Members of the United States Congress. Thank you for being here. Ladies and gentlemen. I particularly want to thank the members of the diplomatic corps who are here. Thank the ambassadors for coming today.

We are representing 84 countries united against a common danger and joined in a common purpose. We are the nations that have recognized the threat of terrorism, and we are the nations that will defeat that threat. Each of us has pledged before the world: We will never bow to the violence of a few. We will face this mortal danger, and we will overcome it together.

As we meet, violence and death at the hands of terrorists are still fresh in our memory. The people of Spain are burying their innocent dead. These men and women and children began their day in a great and peaceful city, yet lost their lives on a battlefield, murdered at random and without remorse. Americans saw the chaos and the grief and the vigils and the funerals, and we have shared in the sorrow of the Spanish people. Ambassador Ruperez, please accept our deepest sympathy for the great loss that your country has suffered.

The murders in Madrid are a reminder that the civilized world is at war, and in this new kind of war, civilians find themselves suddenly on the frontlines. In recent years, terrorists have struck from Spain to Russia to Israel to East Africa to Morocco to the Philippines and to America. They've targeted Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Yemen. They have attacked Muslims in Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan. No nation or region is exempt from the terrorists' campaign of violence.

Each of these attacks on the innocent is a shock and a tragedy and a test of our will. Each attack is designed to demoralize our people and divide us from one another. And each attack must be answered not only with sorrow but with greater determination, deeper resolve, and bolder action against the killers. It is the interest of every country and the duty of every government to fight and destroy this threat to our people.

There is no dividing line—there is a dividing line in our world, not between nations and not between religions or cultures but a dividing line separating two visions of justice and the value of life. On a tape claiming responsibility for the atrocities in Madrid, a man is heard to say, "We choose death, while you choose life." We don't know if this is the voice of the actual killers, but we do know

it expresses the creed of the enemy. It is a mindset that rejoices in suicide, incites murder, and celebrates every death we mourn. And we who stand on the other side of the line must be equally clear and certain of our convictions. We do love life, the life given to us and to all. We believe in the values that uphold the dignity of life, tolerance and freedom and the right of conscience. And we know that this way of life is worth defending. There is no neutral ground—no neutral ground—in the fight between civilization and terror, because there is no neutral ground between good and evil, freedom and slavery, and life and death.

The war on terror is not a figure of speech. It is an inescapable calling of our generation. The terrorists are offended not merely by our policies; they are offended by our existence as free nations. No concession will appease their hatred. No accommodation will satisfy their endless demands. Their ultimate ambitions are to control the peoples of the Middle East and to blackmail the rest of the world with weapons of mass terror.

There can be no separate peace with the terrorist enemy. Any sign of weakness or retreat simply validates terrorist violence and invites more violence for all nations. The only certain way to protect our people is by united and decisive action. In this contest of will and purpose, not every nation joins every mission or participates in the same way. Yet, every nation makes a vital contribution, and America is proud to stand with all of you as we pursue a broad strategy in the war against terror.

We are using every tool of finance, intelligence, law enforcement, and military power to break terror networks, to deny them refuge, and to find their leaders. Over the past 30 months, we have frozen or seized nearly $200 million in assets of terror networks. We have captured or killed some two-thirds of Al Qaida's known leaders as well as many of Al Qaida's associates in countries like the United States or Germany or Pakistan or Saudi Arabia or Thailand. We are taking the fight to Al Qaida allies, such as Ansar Al-Islam in Iraq, Jemaah Islamiya in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Our coalition is sending an unmistakable message to the terrorists, including those who struck in Madrid: These killers will be tracked down and found; they will face their day of justice.

Our coalition is taking urgent action to stop the transfer of deadly weapons and materials. America and the nations of Australia and France and Germany and Italy and Japan and the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada, Singapore, and Norway have joined in the Proliferation Security Initiative, all aimed to bind together to interdict lethal materials transported by air or sea or land. Many governments have cooperated to expose and dismantle the network of A.Q. Khan, which sold nuclear secrets to Libya, Iran, and North Korea. By all these efforts, we are determined to prevent catastrophic technologies from falling into the hands of an embittered few.

Our coalition is also confronting the dangerous combination of outlaw states, terrorist groups, and weapons of mass destruction. For years, the Taliban made Afghanistan the home base of Al Qaida. And so we gave the Taliban a choice, to abandon forever their support for terror or face the destruction of their regime. Because the Taliban chose defiance, our coalition acted to remove this threat. And now the terror camps are closed, and the Government of a free Afghanistan is represented here today as an active partner in the war on terror.

The people of Afghanistan are a world away from the nightmare of the Taliban. Citizens of Afghanistan have adopted a new constitution guaranteeing free elections and full participation by women. The new Afghan army is becoming a vital force of stability in that country. Businesses are opening, health care centers are being established, and the children of Afghanistan are back in school, boys and girls.

This progress is a tribute to the brave Afghan people and to the efforts of many nations. NATO, including forces from Canada, France, Germany, and other nations, is leading the effort to provide security. Japan and Saudi Arabia have helped to complete the highway from Kabul to Kandahar, which is furthering commerce and unifying the country. Italy is working with Afghans to reform

their legal system and strengthening an independent judiciary. Three years ago, the people of Afghanistan were oppressed and isolated from the world by a terrorist regime. Today, that nation has a democratic government and many allies, and all of us are proud to be friends of the Afghan people.

Many countries represented here today also acted to liberate the people of Iraq. One year ago, military forces of a strong coalition entered Iraq to enforce United Nations demands, to defend our security, and to liberate that country from the rule of a tyrant. For Iraq, it was a day of deliverance. For the nations of our coalition, it was the moment when years of demands and pledges turned to decisive action. Today, as Iraqis join the free peoples of the world, we mark a turning point for the Middle East and a crucial advance for human liberty.

There have been disagreements in this matter among old and valued friends. Those differences belong to the past. All of us can now agree that the fall of the Iraqi dictator has removed a source of violence, aggression, and instability in the Middle East. It's a good thing that the demands of the United Nations were enforced, not ignored with impunity. It is a good thing that years of illicit weapons development by the dictator have come to the end. It is a good thing that the Iraqi people are now receiving aid instead of suffering under sanctions. And it is a good thing that the men and women across the Middle East, looking to Iraq, are getting a glimpse of what life in a free country can be like.

There are still violent thugs and murderers in Iraq, and we're dealing with them. But no one can argue that the Iraqi people would be better off with the thugs and murderers back in the palaces. Who would prefer that Saddam's torture chambers still be open? Who would wish that more mass graves were still being filled? Who would begrudge the Iraqi people their long-awaited liberation? One year after the armies of liberation arrived, every soldier who has fought, every aid worker who has served, every Iraqi who has joined in their country's defense can look with pride on a brave and historic achievement. They've served in freedom's cause, and that is a privilege.

Today in Iraq, a British-led division is securing the southern city of Basra. Poland continues to lead a multinational division in south-central Iraq. Japan and the Republic of Korea—of South Korea have made historic commitments of troops to help bring peace to Iraq. Special forces from El Salvador and Macedonia and other nations are helping to find and defeat Ba'athist and terrorist killers. Military engineers from Kazakhstan have cleared more than a half a million explosive devices from Iraq. Turkey is helping to resupply coalition forces. All of these nations and many others are meeting their responsibilities to the people of Iraq.

Whatever their past views, every nation now has an interest in a free, successful, stable Iraq. And the terrorists understand their own interest in the fate of that country. For them, the connection between Iraq's future and the course of the war on terror is very clear. They understand that a free Iraq will be a devastating setback to their ambitions of tyranny over the Middle East. And they have made the failure of democracy in Iraq one of their primary objectives.

By attacking coalition forces, by targeting innocent Iraqis and foreign civilians for murder, the terrorists are trying to weaken our will. Instead of weakness, they're finding resolve. Not long ago, we intercepted a planning document being sent to leaders of Al Qaida by one of their associates, a man named Zarqawi. Along with the usual threats, he had a complaint: "Our enemy," said Zarqawi, "is growing stronger, and his intelligence data are increasing day by day. This is suffocation." Zarqawi is getting the idea. We will never turn over Iraq to terrorists who intend our own destruction. We will not fail the Iraqi people, who have placed their trust in us. Whatever it takes, we will fight and work to assure the success of freedom in Iraq.

Many coalition countries have sacrificed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Among the fallen soldiers and civilians are sons and daughters of Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We honor

their courage. We pray for the comfort of their families. We will uphold the cause they served.

The rise of democratic institutions in Afghanistan and Iraq is a great step toward a goal of lasting importance to the world. We have set out to encourage reform and democracy in the greater Middle East as the alternatives to fanaticism, resentment, and terror. We've set out to break the cycle of bitterness and radicalism that has brought stagnation to a vital region and destruction to cities in America and Europe and around the world. This task is historic and difficult. This task is necessary and worthy of our efforts.

In the 1970s, the advance of democracy in Lisbon and Madrid inspired democratic change in Latin America. In the 1980s, the example of Poland ignited a fire of freedom in all of Eastern Europe. With Afghanistan and Iraq showing the way, we are confident that freedom will lift the sights and hopes of millions in the greater Middle East.

One man who believed in our cause was a Japanese diplomat named Katsuhiko Oku. He worked for the Coalition Provision Authority in Iraq. Mr. Oku was killed when his car was ambushed. In his diary he described his pride in the cause he had joined. "The free people of Iraq," he wrote, "are now making steady progress in reconstructing their country while also fighting against the threat of terrorism. We must join hands with the Iraqi people in their effort to prevent Iraq from falling into the hands of terrorists." This good, decent man concluded, "This is also our fight to defend freedom."

Ladies and gentlemen, this good man from Japan was right. The establishment of a free Iraq is our fight. The success of a free Afghanistan is our fight. The war on terror is our fight. All of us are called to share the blessings of liberty and to be strong and steady in freedom's defense. It will surely be said of our times that we lived with great challenges. Let it also be said of our times that we understood our great duties and met them in full.

May God bless our efforts.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:02 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Javier Ruperez, Spain's Ambassador to the United States; A.Q. Khan, former head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi.

Remarks After Visiting Wounded Soldiers and Their Families at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

March 19, 2004

It is such an honor to come to a hospital like Walter Reed, for a couple of reasons. One is to meet the wounded who have made a decision to sacrifice for this Nation's security and for freedom in the world. It is an honor to meet their parents or their wives, their children—brave souls who support their loved one with all their heart.

It's an honor to be with the doctors and nurses of this fantastic facility who are doing unbelievable work in helping bring these people back on their feet, back into their communities.

One of the most important things for a Commander in Chief is to be able to say to a loved one, if your son or daughter or husband or wife gets injured, you'll get the best possible care as quickly as possible. Every time I come to Walter Reed, it confirms that which I know, which is: we're providing the very best—the best care, the best compassion. We're moving these soldiers from the battlefield to hospitals as quickly as we can so they can begin their rehab.

And it's fantastic to go upstairs. The spirit is strong. The attitudes are terrific. Several soldiers told me today, badly injured soldiers—they want to get well quickly and get back on their duty stations in Iraq, want to serve our Nation.

It is so refreshing and great to be here. I want to thank you, General, for your hospitality.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Kevin Kiley, USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 13

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

March 14

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush attended a gala at Ford's Theatre.

March 15

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Putin of Russia to discuss President Putin's March 14 reelection victory. President Bush then had a telephone conversation with President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia to thank her for Latvia's support in Iraq and discuss Latvia's upcoming accession into NATO.

Later in the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with outgoing President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain to thank him for his support, friendship, and leadership during his term. President Bush then had a telephone conversation with President-elect Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain to congratulate him on his March 14 election victory.

Also in the morning, the President participated in a photo opportunity with finalists of Intel Corporation's Science Talent Search.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Ardmore, PA, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Robert S. Bright. Later, he visited the home of first-time homebuyer Pearl Cerdan.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

March 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President participated in a photo opportunity with recipients of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching.

The President announced his intention to nominate Constance Berry Newman to be Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan W. Dudas to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

The President announced his intention to designate Thomas Neil Hull III as Ambassador to Sierra Leone.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jendayi Elizabeth Frazer to be Ambassador to South Africa.

The President announced his intention to designate Mitchell B. Reiss as Special Envoy for Northern Ireland and to nominate him for the rank of Ambassador during his term of service.

March 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland. Then, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, he participated in a photo opportunity with Northern Ireland political and civic leaders. Later, on the State Floor, he participated in a Saint Patrick's Day reception.

In the afternoon, at the Capitol, the President and Prime Minister Ahern attended a Saint Patrick's Day luncheon hosted by Speaker of the House of Representatives J. Dennis Hastert.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Director General Mohamed ElBaradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency to discuss efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The President announced his intention to nominate R. Niels Marquardt to be Ambassador to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lauren Moriarty for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as U.S. Senior Official to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.

March 18

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis of Greece to congratulate him on his party's March 7 parliamentary election victory, and to discuss the situation in Cyprus and security for the upcoming Olympic Games in Athens. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Fort Campbell, KY, where, upon arrival, the President greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Billy C. Colwell, Sr.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush had lunch with U.S. military personnel. They then visited with family members of U.S. military personnel killed in Iraq.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Roger A. Meece to be Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President announced his intention to nominate James Moriarty to be Ambassador to Nepal.

March 19

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland to discuss the war on terrorism, the situation in Iraq, and other issues. He then had a telephone conversation with President Jacques Chirac of France to discuss the upcoming 60th anniversary of D-day and to thank him for his support against terrorism following the March 11 terrorist attacks in Madrid, Spain.

Later in the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released March 15

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3915 and S. 714

Fact sheet: Expanding Homeownership for All Americans

Released March 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2136

Fact sheet: Affordable Health Care for America's Families

Released March 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Announcement: Mrs. Bush To Host White House Salute to America's Authors: Classic American Stories Celebrated

Released March 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released March 19

Statement by the Press Secretary: Shooting of Mr. Chen Shui-Bian and Ms. Annette Lu in Taiwan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 506 and H.R. 2059

Acts Approved by the President

Approved March 15

H.R. 3915 / Public Law 108–205
To provide for an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 through April 2, 2004, and for other purposes

S. 714 / Public Law 108–206
To provide for the conveyance of a small parcel of Bureau of Land Management land in Douglas County, Oregon, to the county to improve management of and recreational access to the Oregon Dunes National Recreational Area, and for other purposes

Approved March 16

S. 2136 / Public Law 108–207
To extend the final report date and termination date of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, to provide additional funding for the Commission, and for other purposes

Approved March 19

H.R. 506 / Public Law 108–208
Galisteo Basin Archaeological Sites Protection Act

H.R. 2059 / Public Law 108–209
Fort Bayard National Historic Landmark Act

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